Sierra Club and local communities call for immediate clean up of toxic AFFF foam used at Deer Park chemical facility fire

The Houston Chronicle reported March 19th that more than 130,000 gallons of toxic Class B fire fighting foams had been used to extinguish the chemical plant fire at the Intercontinental Terminal Company in Deer Park, TX, several days before the fire fighting response was completed.

Sierra Club, and a coalition of community leaders, organizations and residents from Deer Park, Pasadena and Houston call for urgent and immediate action to contain the PFAS chemicals and remove all the possible contamination from the shipping channel and tributaries to Galveston Bay.

PFAS-containing fire fighting foams have contaminated hundreds of waterways and drinking water systems in the United States.

The chemicals cannot be broken down, and persist indefinitely in the environment.

They are highly toxic to human health – both emergency responders who apply the chemicals and people who eat contaminated fish and shellfish or drink contaminated water.

The Interstate Technology Regulatory Council and many states and the military call for AFFF to be limited to emergency response, and for immediate cleanup to prevent contamination to waterways.

Recommendations for Urgent Action to Protect the Houston Ship Channel and Galveston Bay from PFAS Contamination

1. Gather information about the type and quantity of fire fighting foams used in emergency response.
2. Immediately contain all water running off the Intercontinental Terminal Company site. We recommend that the foam be pumped out of the ship channel and tanked for future destruction. If these PFAS chemicals reach the Galveston Bay, they will contaminate the fish stocks and sediments for centuries. Contact Arcadis Environmental for expertise in PFAS remediation and destruction. Jeff Burdick 267/685-1804.
3. Collect water samples from the ship channel and the Galveston Bay, and analyze for PFAS chemicals using Method 537 plus the TOP Assay. (The AFFF contains chemicals known as fluorotelomeres, which only the TOP Assay can detect). Make sure to use the appropriate protocols. Contact Andy Eaton at Eurofins Analytical Laboratories for technical assistance on PFAS analysis 626/386-1125.

4. One of the few technologies known to destroy PFAS is Supercritical Water Oxidation. Contact John Follin at General Atomics for information at 858-964-6805.
5. A fish testing protocol for the ship channel and the bay should be put in place and initiated immediately for chemical contamination of the fish. The state of Michigan has extensive experience testing fish for PFAS chemicals contamination as well as Vista Laboratory in Sacramento. Contact Vista Analytical Laboratory at 916/673-1520.

Respectfully,

Bryan Parras

Organizer, Sierra Club